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C O R N L A W S.



OBSERVATIONS.

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

CORN LAWS

OF

I R E L A N D,

SO FAR AS THEY PARTIALLY RELATE TO THE
METROPOLIS.

D U B L I N :

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OBSEKVATIONS

ON THE

PRESIDENTIAL

CORRECTION



SO FAR AS THEY RELATE TO THE

UNIVERSITY

DUBLIN

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OBSERVATIONS, &c.

OUR present Corn Laws, so far as they partially relate to the metropolis, are founded on principles so mistaken and dangerous, and their operations so generally misunderstood, that few great subjects, interesting to the nation, more pressingly demand serious investigation, and proper elucidation; a task this, to which the writer feels little equal. Yet, if his hints, though rudely thrown together, shall give rise to abler discussion, a useful purpose will be attained.

The points in which our Corn Laws make a distinction between the metropolis and the other ports of the kingdom, are two—of infinite importance and magnitude in their effects.

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The one, *The discouraging*, or more truly speaking, *the prohibiting the export of corn from Dublin, by refusing to it any participation in the corn export bounties, granted to the other ports of the kingdom.*

The other, *The granting bounties to every part of the kingdom, to bring corn to the metropolis.*

A superficial observer might conceive, that these were measures of great kindness to the metropolis, and that the intention of the Legislature, in preventing corn from being exported from Dublin, and in giving bounties for bringing corn to Dublin, was to secure to the metropolis at all times a cheap and abundant supply of grain ; but that the effect of both regulations, considered as a conjoint system, is directly the reverse, will be no very difficult matter to prove.

The growth of corn is so much influenced by seasons, as frequently to vary in the produce of a harvest, a third, or a fourth part ; an excess of a fourth part in the growth of a good season, or a decrease of
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a fourth part in the growth of a bad season, will be found in a country depending much for its subsistence on grain, of the most extensive influence, either offering a large redundancy for export, or requiring a large substitution of imported corn to supply the deficient growth.

Hence the object of a wise Legislature, in encouraging by every means a large redundant growth of grain, not only as a most desirable article of commerce, but as necessary to secure to the home consumption a sufficient supply in unfavourable seasons. An export trade must be by every means invited to take off this redundancy;—for, without it, the redundant growth will not exist; and if the growth of a country be in general confined barely to the quantum of its own consumption, scarcity and distress, for the reasons before assigned, will oftentimes be its portion.

The same reasoning applies with equal force to the consumption or supply of a great city. The same policy that is requisite to give plenty to the nation, will be found requisite to give plenty to the metropolis.

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To insure at all times a sufficiency for the consumption, a considerable surplus supply should be procured to Dublin; for, if the supply forwarded be in general only just commensurate to the consumption, severity of weather, and a variety of accidental impediments, will frequently occur to obstruct it, and a short obstruction to so limited a supply, will cause scarcity. This surplus supply, so necessary to insure a competency for the consumption, cannot exist without an export from the metropolis to give it occasional vent. For in a limited market, such as Dublin now is, without a vent for any casual surplus, a small comparative excess causes a glut, discourages the farmer, induces him the next moment to withhold his supply, and is generally quickly succeeded by scarcity.

But the great mischief to the object of supply arising from the want of a corn export from Dublin, is the discouragement it offers to agriculture in its contiguous counties, and hence principally arises the present uncertain and insufficient state of the supply of grain to the metropolis.

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Dublin is the port, and the only port of several counties in its vicinity, which have no other vent or market for their grain, but the consumption of Dublin, which is open on equal terms, by means of the carriage bounties, to every and the most distant parts of the kingdom. How unequal is the lot of those counties contiguous to the metropolis?—they possess but this one market; the distant counties possess, on equal terms, the same market, and have, in addition, their vicinal ports, to take off, by export, under large bounties, any surplus growth that the consumption of Dublin cannot absorb. If it be wisdom, (as undoubtedly it is the greatest) for the promotion of agriculture, to induce a large redundant growth of grain in the kingdom, by inviting and encouraging an extensive corn export trade to give it vent; surely a reverse policy in the counties contiguous to the metropolis, must have its natural consequence—a depression of agriculture.

Agriculture being thus evidently discouraged in the counties contiguous to the metropolis, obliges Dublin to depend for the
bulk

bulk of its consumption on corn brought from the distant counties. The proprietors of grain in those counties will naturally ever look to that market which will pay them the higher price ; if the export demand under export bounties from their vicinal ports shall do so, Dublin, for the time, may bid adieu to their supplies ; and this has operated so powerfully of late, that at some periods there has been much less bread corn in the metropolis than the supply of a week's consumption, and it becomes every day (so long as the present system shall be adhered to) a more ferocious and dangerous impediment to its sufficient supply, by as much as the corn export of the kingdom becomes more extensive ; thus reducing to a partial evil, what, under proper regulation, would be a general good. But what would be the situation of the metropolis under such an export demand, if agriculture met its full and due encouragement in the counties contiguous to it, and that Dublin drew from them the natural and proper proportion of its supply—large orders for grain no doubt, might and would come to Dublin, in like manner as to the other ports of the kingdom.—
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Would this export demand leave Dublin unsupplied ?—No !—because the corn of those contiguous counties can only be exported from, and must pass through Dublin ; and if the export demand shall call for more than the consumption of Dublin can spare, the extent of that consumption will quickly raise prices to that standard, which the Legislature has wisely fixed as a bar to an improvident export. In this case, bread might be dear in the metropolis, but bread would be had ; in the former, bread would not only be dear, but might not be had.

Thus far what has been advanced, incontrovertibly proves that the discouraging or preventing the export of grain from the metropolis, tends to render its supply of corn unsteady and insufficient, instead of certain and abundant, and to advance, instead of reducing to it, the price of this most essential article of its subsistence.

It now remains, shortly to examine, how far carriage bounties are necessary to the supply of the metropolis ; and next to consider whether corn export bounties
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from Dublin, at an expence to the nation comparatively trivial, would not be of greater advantage to the distant miller and farmer.

If it shall appear that carriage bounties are not necessary to the supply of the metropolis, and that the distant miller and farmer would be advantaged by Dublin's commuting the carriage bounty for the export bounty, it may confidently be presumed, that our present system of absurdity will not much longer be persevered in.

Prejudices of long standing are not easily removed :—Agriculture has increased, and latterly greatly flourished in Ireland, accompanied with the establishment of corn carriage bounties ; and people from hence superficially concluded, that carriage bounties are essential to the prosperity and support of Irish agriculture, without reverting to the period at which those carriage bounties took place, considering their operation, or comparing the state of things at this day with that of the time when the carriage bounties were granted.

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When the corn carriage bounties took place, Ireland was open to the unrestrained import of grain from every part of the world. Great Britain then, as at present, gave a bounty on the export of wheat of five shillings per quarter, which not only paid the carriage or freight of its wheat to Dublin, but afforded a considerable surplus; by means of this English export bounty, the Irish farmer, 20 miles distant from Dublin, could not maintain a competition with the English farmer in the supply of the Irish metropolis, because the Irish farmer was out of pocket the whole expence of carriage to the Dublin market; whereas the English farmer had his full expence of carriage paid, and a considerable profit over.

Ireland was at that day in too depressed a state to venture to propose, what she has since demanded and obtained, namely, protection to her agriculture, and exclusion even to the corn of Great Britain, till the necessities of Ireland shall require an import.

Previous to this, the advantage derived from the Irish carriage bounties, was counteracted

teraction to the English export bounties, and the Irish farmer, by means of his carriage bounty, being put something on a footing with the English farmer with his export bounty, held up his head, and made a struggle.

Under this species of encouragement, the Irish agriculture increased, but cannot be said to have flourished till after the passing of the above celebrated law, granting to it permanent and effectual protection ; for though the import of grain into Ireland decreased, still the import continued, and was considerable. Since the protecting law in question has taken effect, import of grain into Ireland has totally ceased, and the export for the year ending the 25th March, 1789, exceeded in value the enormous sum of 600,000 *l*.

This very prosperous state of our agriculture surely cannot be ascribed to our carriage bounty system, because it did not arise till after our corn protecting law took effect ;—the most that the carriage bounty system has done, or ever could do, was to give to the
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Irish farmer a place in the market of his metropolis ; this market, the corn law in question has permanently and exclusively secured to him, and now leaves the corn carriage bounty system, in point of necessity or use, a perfect *caput mortuum*. Had twenty years ago those carriage bounties been abolished, and our corn protecting law, and corn export bounties from Dublin substituted, it is no visionary or unfounded speculation to say, that the Irish agriculture would, at this day, be in a more prosperous state, and the nation full one million and a half less in debt.

After having thus endeavoured to shew that the prosperity of Irish agriculture is not dependent on, or attached to, our corn carriage bounty system, it next occurs to examine how far carriage bounties are necessary, to induce a supply of grain from the distant counties to the metropolis ; and in this examination the third point will necessarily be involved, namely, whether the distant miller and farmer would not be advantaged by Dublin's commuting the carriage bounty for the export bounty.

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As to the necessity of carriage bounties to induce a supply of grain from the distant counties to Dublin, it will here naturally occur to remark, that Dublin is the only great city of Europe, or perhaps of the world, that such a system is attached to. That *London*, four times as large, and five times more populous than Dublin, is, without carriage bounties, more certainly and abundantly supplied with corn, than Dublin, with its carriage bounties, because London has a corn export trade. That bread corn in London, (as may be seen by the *London Gazette*) usually averages under the general average of the rest of the Kingdom; whereas, in Dublin, bread corn usually averages above the general average of the rest of the kingdom—because Dublin has not a corn export trade. These are facts incontestible, and considerations of infinite weight, at least to shew that a great city, if corn be in the country, may certainly and safely be supplied without carriage bounties, merely by that speculation and trade, which a market of extensive consumption and extensive export will naturally and inevitably attract to it.

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But what has Dublin to fear, or the distant miller or farmer to lose, from the abolishing the carriage bounties? The present system or principle of the land carriage bounties, is to give to the manufactured grain the whole expence of carriage, and to the unmanufactured grain half the expence of carriage to the metropolis. The average expence of carriage by land is about 2d. per cwt. for every five miles; the average expence of carriage or freightage by water is, from the southern coasts, about 6d. or 7d. per cwt. from the western, about 8d. or 9d. per cwt. If the miller or farmer be distant from the port where the supply is to be sent coastways, the expence of carriage for said distance, according to the above rate, (unless navigable rivers or canals intervene, in which case the extra expence will be much less) is to be added to the freightage.

If the land carriage bounty was doubled, or trebled, accompanied by a condition that the grain or flour should be sent *via* Donaghadee to Dublin, or any other circuitous route, the enhanced expence of which equalled the increased bounty, no additional advantage could derive therefrom to the miller

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or farmer.—The law now allows the miller at Cork 4s. 2d. and to the miller in Clonmell 2s. 8d. bounty on one cwt. of flour, if they send it by land, which is the actual expence of the carriage : the miller in Cork can send his cwt. of flour to Dublin by water for 6d. or 7d. ; the miller in Clonmell for 9d. or 10d.—If the law restricted the conveyance to be by water, and paid the full expence of carriage by the same, would not the miller be equally advantaged as by a land bounty, only equalling the expence of carriage by land ? Thus, if the carriage bounties were abolished, and nature no longer perverted, from every quarter the cheapest mode of conveyance would be adopted, which reduces the question to the simplest and truest statement.—The miller in Cork or Clonmell, if he sends by land, now enjoys no greater advantage than the payment of the actual expence of his carriage ; but if the change alluded to took place, there would be an export bounty on flour from Dublin of 1s. 11d. per cwt. which, to the Cork miller, would overpay his expence of carriage 1s. 4d. to 1s. 5d. per cwt ; and, to the Clonmell miller, 1s. 1d. and 1s. 2d. per cwt.—For, so surely as the course of exchange between countries is regulated by the balance of trade, so, as truly, will

will the price of corn in an export country be regulated by the export demand, a part of the price of which export bounties must ever form, and therefore will as certainly come home to, the miller's or farmer's pocket, as bounties, granted in any other shape, can do. Else, why should the millers, in times of export demand, send their flour to their vicinal port, (at an expence out of pocket of 20 or 30 miles carriage) rather than to Dublin, to which the expence of carriage is fully paid, but because the export bounty in their vicinal port exceeds the expence of carriage to it, and which exceeding of the export bounty becomes, bona fide, a part of the price of their commodity.—In like manner, will the farmer or proprietor of raw grain, be advantaged by the proposed change. The carriage bounties, if averaged on the whole quantity of each species of raw corn brought to Dublin, would not amount on wheat to 10d. per barrel, on barley and oats to 4d. per barrel; the export bounty on wheat is 3s. 4d. on barley 1s. 7d. on oats 1s. 5d. per barrel.

Sligo, Galway, Limerick, distant as they are, may send their grain and flour to Dublin at an expence of 8d. or 9d. per cwt. and there

there will be found few of the distant parts of Ireland, that, through their most convenient conveyance by water, cannot send their grain and flour to Dublin at an expence of 1s. to 1s. 6d. per cwt. Can Dublin, then, fear to lose the supply of the distant counties, when the expence of conveyance places Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Ross, Limerick, Galway, Sligo, and the other ports of Ireland, within twenty miles of the metropolis, Clonmell within twenty-five miles, and few parts of the kingdom at a distance exceeding thirty to forty miles ?

Or, can the distant counties fear to be deprived of the Dublin market, when the expence of conveyance gives them such absolute contiguity ? And perhaps nothing can depict more strongly than this review, the lavishment of corn carriage bounties in Ireland, a compact island, abounding in ports, well furnished with navigable rivers, possessing a cheap and easy conveyance by water almost from every quarter, which will be rendered nearly universal, when our projected canals are fully completed.

Thus far has gone to prove, that carriage bounties, taken separately, are not necessary
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to the supply of the metropolis, and, that considered as part of a system which excludes Dublin from a corn export trade, instead of promoting plenty, they are the means of the metropolis being unsteadily and insufficiently supplied.

It now remains to shew, that if the system of carriage bounties was even innoxious in respect to the supply of the metropolis, or to the general corn commerce of the kingdom, it is attended with evils too serious to be lightly considered.

The squandering away 80,000l. a year in carriage bounties, and the heaping oppressive taxes on the poor and necessitous, in order to provide for this useless, wanton, and idle prodigality, is not the greatest mischief attached to a system of such absurdity ; the more serious evils are, the disturbing and displacing the natural order of things ; the giving a great trade a temporary course or channel, that cannot be permanently supported ; and the discouraging our shipping and navigation, by giving bounties to induce, in perversion of nature, to be carried to the metropolis at a heavy expence *by land*, what

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would as safely and certainly be brought to it at a small expence *by water*. The extent of this latter evil is not easy to estimate, but it may in some degree be conceived from the following limited statement. Dublin consumes annually between 7 and 800,000 barrels of corn of every species, including malt, meal, and flour. Not more than about one third of this quantity is brought to it *coastways*; supposing only one half of the residue to be diverted from its natural channel by the land carriage bounties, and that if they did not exist, so much more would be carried coastways, it would give yearly and constant employment to nearly 100 vessels of 50 tons burthen each; but probably the number would be considerably more, as, at certain seasons, many would betake themselves to the fisheries and other casual employs, permanently and substantially, however, supported, by this steady and extensive occupation that would be opened to them.

After having proved that the present system of our corn laws, so far as they partially relate to Dublin, instead of benefiting, are injurious to its supply, it next occurs to shew, the national impolicy and the national impoverishment

verishment which derive from Dublin being excluded from the corn export trade, inasmuch as the aggregate corn export of the kingdom is diminished thereby.

The export of corn, like the export of any other article of commerce, (the growth or manufacture of which is not confined by some circumstance, natural or casual, to the country exporting) will most flourish and extend in those countries who shall possess the most forward place in the markets of demand; such markets will be possessed by those who shall be able to furnish the supply cheapest, and on terms the most advantageous and convenient to the place demanding it.

In the commerce of corn, Ireland has a critical competition to maintain, (which from the rapid encrease of agriculture in the western world is likely to augment) with the Baltic, America, and other countries, who are of weight in this trade.—Such our competition, view the objects we contend for!

Great Britain, now arrived at nearly the highest state of national prosperity, its population.

lation great, its inhabitants rich, its manufactures and commerce wonderfully extended, but its agriculture or growth of corn, though nothing lessened, yet not equal to that immensity of consumption which must arise in so rich, populous, and manufacturing a kingdom, offers to Ireland, *but only in common as it does to other nations*, the most desirable markets that will probably in general exist for the vent of our redundant growth of corn. The single port of Liverpool imports foreign corn annually little short of the value of 200,000*l.* for the consumption of itself, and the rich and populous manufacturing towns around it. Several of the southern countries of Europe, not genial to the production of corn, must in general depend for the bulk of their supply on imported grain. With proper attention in the management of its powers to the best advantage, Ireland need not fear to find vent for a considerably encreased redundant growth of grain.

With such objects in view, with so powerful a competition to surmount, what is our wretched policy? With our own hands to mutilate our own powers, and by our own laws to exclude the chief port of our kingdom

dom from taking part in a trade, contributive of such immense national advantages, and that port of our kingdom possessing the greatest faculties to give extension to this trade! Is it because the great mart of Liverpool is open equally to the Baltic and America as to us, that, in a bravo, we disdain using an advantage nature has given us; that we shut up that port of our kingdom exactly opposite to Liverpool, from whence one wind and half freight could convey the supply, and limit ourselves to the other ports of our kingdom, from whence two winds and double freight will be necessary to convey the supply?—Or, is it because capital is a necessary ingredient to the extension of commerce, that we exclude from the corn export trade the capitals of the metropolis, the greatest of the kingdom?—In few words—is it because Dublin, from its superior capitals, convenience of shipping, cheapness of its return freights, (being the great seat of our import trade) is the best circumstanced port of our kingdom for giving a favourable and extensive vent to our redundant growth of corn, we, in diminution of our own powers, and to the advantage of our competitors, exclude it from any participation in the corn export trade?

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With equal good policy and wisdom, might the British Legislature discourage the Iron manufacture at Birmingham, because coals around it are cheap and plentiful, or the woollen manufacture at Halifax or Leeds, because situated in a country abounding in wool.

The system is too strongly marked with the feature of absurdity, to need further exposition.

But the diminution, which this exclusion of Dublin from the corn export trade, is of the quantum or value of the aggregate export of the kingdom, is of too serious a nature to be silently passed over. It cannot be estimated short of a very considerable sum.

It has been before observed, that in the year ending the 25th March, 1789, the value of corn exported from the kingdom amounted to upwards of 600,000*l.* which was supplied, or at least the great bulk of it, from the redundant growth of the following counties, viz. Down, Louth, a part of Meath, Wexford, Waterford, Tipperary, Kilkenny, Cork, and Limerick.

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If Dublin was suffered to participate in the corn export trade, a redundant growth, now depressed, would take place in the following counties, which would derive an export vent through the port of the metropolis, viz. Dublin, the greater part of Meath, Westmeath, Longford, King's County, Queen's County and Kildare. If the counties first mentioned shall in one year export redundant corn to the value of nearly 600,000*l.* surely, on such a scale, it is moderate to estimate the value of the export, from the last mentioned counties, through the port of Dublin, and of course the encreased aggregate corn export of the kingdom, (by allowing Dublin to participate in the corn export trade) at 200,000*l.*

Some interested individuals have had the weakness to cry out, that, the granting to Dublin the corn export bounties, would injure the corn export trade of the out ports ; and others, more reserved, but equally influenced by this partial, though mistaken impression, give underhand every opposition in their power.

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It is almost an insult to the public and common sense, to enter into any refutation of such an objection. Admitting for a moment the fact to be as stated, is it justice or policy totally to exclude Dublin from the corn export trade, because its participating in it, might *something diminish* the corn export trade of the out ports? How would the merchant of Waterford feel, if he was told it would be necessary to shut up his port from the export of grain, because it interfered with the corn export trade of Ross? Or if on any occasion the export trade from Dublin should offer to the distant farmer a more advantageous price for his grain than his contiguous port; how would he relish his being interdicted the enjoyment of it?

No doubt, corn and flour, the produce of the distant counties, and sent from the out ports to Dublin, when at times forming too great a supply to be taken off by its consumption, would under export bounties find an export vent through the port of the metropolis.

Will those very conscientious advocates for the out ports contend, that it is impolitick to
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give the distant miller or farmer the additional market, of an export from Dublin, or that such miller or farmer should be forced to dispose of his commodity at a depreciated price in a glutted market, when an export vent from Dublin, if permitted, would give him for it, a fair and equitable rate, suited to the general circumstances of the trade and kingdom? Or can the merchants in the out ports be so grossly stupified as not to conceive, that encrease of market to their vicinal lands, will cause encrease of produce, and that thereby the emoluments of their necessary and indispensable agency will be multiplied? But to come more directly to the point. The idea that the opening the export of grain from Dublin, would unnaturally lessen or divert the corn export of the out ports, is a manifest absurdity, equally unfounded in fact as in reason. When it is considered that the bare freight of a barrel of wheat from Waterford or Cork to Dublin, (exclusive of commission and other attendant charges) will amount to 1s. 3d. per barrel, (and so in proportion for other grain) surely no person can entertain a serious thought, that the merchant in either or in any port, will

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send or bring from the out ports corn to Dublin, merely to be exported from thence, when it can be exported on equal bounty from the out port.

The foregoing short observations, hastily put together, have attempted to shew, that the present system of our corn laws, so far as they partially relate to the metropolis is founded in error, and productive of evil—that it circumscribes commerce—discourages agriculture—wastes public revenue—renders unsteady and insufficient the supply of grain to the metropolis—and diminishes our shipping and navigation.

The city of Dublin, in its corporate capacity, not under a hasty determination, but after mature deliberation, after consulting and receiving information from those conceived most competent to give it, have petitioned parliament, stating the insufficiency and uncertainty of their supply of grain, which, after the fullest investigation and upon the clearest principles they ascribe to Dublin's
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being precluded from a corn export trade, and therefore pray that there may be granted to the metropolis the same bounties on the export of corn, as the other ports of the kingdom enjoy.

The merchants of Dublin, a most respectable but highly injured body of men, come forward to the legislature and complain;—that they are partially oppressed; that, like a set of proscribed culprits, they are debarred from any participation in a great and lucrative trade, open to the rest of the kingdom. They tell the legislature in homely phrase, but in the language of truth, that while they are particularly injured, the nation is generally and deeply wounded; they state that by this unprecedented and unnatural proscription so undeservedly and unwisely inflicted on them, Ireland is despoiled of the full energy of her powers, to carry on and extend a most advantageous commerce, in which she has a powerful competition to surmount, at every market of demand; they claim the justice of parliament, and equal participation
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of benefits in the corn trade with the other ports of the kingdom.

Surely the appeal of such bodies, upon concerns so important, upon a subject so highly interesting to the nation's interests, cannot but receive the legislature's most serious attention, the fullest and most impartial investigation :—Justice to individuals, justice to the nation, demand it.



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